DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 190 933 CG 014 580

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TITLE Sexism and Psychological Constructions.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 31p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (87th, New York, NY, September 1-5, 1979).

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Attribution Theory; Behavior; Correlation; Employment; *Expectation; Individual Characteristics; Influences; Locus of Control; *Performance Factors; Personality Theories; Personality Traits; *Psychological Patterns; *Sex Differences; *Sex Discrimination

ABSTRACT

Although research suggests that men and women are perceived as differing significantly on a number of traits or characteristics, little research relates these traits to observable behaviors. The trait-characteristic issue, when carried over to employment, serves to justify discrimination against women. Research on attribution theory also supports discrimination, suggesting women attribute success to luck while men attribute success to ability. Research has further found that males have higher expectancy of intellectual and academic reinforcement than females; little data is available on the relationship between expectancy and performance. Most psychological theories espouse sex differences that have no behavioral referrents, thus contributing to the maintenance of discriminatory practices. A behavioral approach which eliminates qualitative constructs and emphasizes directly measurable variables and conditions is needed to eliminate discriminatory practices against women. (Author/NRB)

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SEXISM AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTIONS

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CG 014580

This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association in 1979.

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Sexism and Psychological Constructions

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The American Psychological Association has adopted a strong endorsement of women's rights. At the 1977 annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, the Association's support for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was heavily underscored by the rejection of convention sites located in states that have not ratified the ERA. These actions would suggest that psychologists are ardent advocates of equal rights for women. However, we propose the thesis that various psychological theories are supportive of the position that women lack the "characteristics" and "traits" necessary to vie successfully with men in today's world. Moreover, we contend that these psychological theories establish differences between men and women that preclude the development of programs that could perhaps, in time, eliminate or significantly ameliorate these differences. And finally, we propose that a rigorous, perhaps radical, behavioral approach would clearly show that it would be possible to devise programs to eliminate differences if it were deemed desirable to do so.

These theoretical views supportive of sexism share the premise that people have "characteristics" or "traits". These

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"traits" include "emotional traits", "cognitive traits", and perhaps other "traits" that fall outside these two domains. Though the various psychologists operating within these theoretical positions may differ concerning the development of these "traits" (the old heredity versus environment controversy), they do not seem to disagree about the basic data.

One of the most frequently cited articles in this area is by Broverman Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson and Rosenkrantz (1972). These researchers presented data to show that men and women differ significantly, or at least are perceived as differing significantly, on a number of "traits" or "characteristics". For example, men are described as independent, logical, aggressive, unemotional, and so forth. Women, on the other hand, are described as dependent, passive, submissive, illogical, emotional, and so forth. They also reported that there has been very little change in these sex-trait stereotypes over the past 25 years as their results were in essential agreement with the results obtained by Fernberger in 1948 and MacBrayer in 1960.

Despite the persistence over time in the "traits" or "characteristics" that are ascribed to men and women, there is relatively little research that relates these "traits" to observable behaviors. For example, what behaviors are emitted by an individual who is called dependent? In what kind of environmental situations are these behaviors emitted? In other

words, what does one do to be called dependent? Does the doing of that result in one's being called dependent regardless of the environmental setting in which one does it? There is a dearth of research that answers these questions. As will be discussed later in this paper, answers to these questions accrue additional importance.

The "trait"-"characteristic" issue has been carried directly to the realm of employment. O'Leary(1974) maintained that various traits might "inhibit the expression of upward occupational aspirations" (p. 809) among women. In this connection she mentioned such traits as fear of failure, low self-esteem, role conflict, and fear of success. Schein (1973, 1975) reported that her investigations of the "characteristics" of male and female managers in the insurance business revealed a rather marked consistency of the "traits" that characterized the successful managers regardless of sex. Most of these "traits" of successful managers are "traits" that are designated as masculine. This is what O'Leary (1974) called "the male managerial model". It would appear, therefore, that the pool of potentially successful female managers would be much smaller that the pool of potentially successful male managers since more men than women are likely to possess these masculine "traits". As a matter of fact, Schein (1975) stated, "Thus, the sex of the manager may have less of an influence on decisions relating to the status of women than heretofor conceived. Simply increas-

ing the number of women in management may not significantly enhance the ease of entry of other women into their positions."

Support for Schein's position comes from other research. Morrison and Sibald (1974) reported that female executives were significantly higher than non-executive females in the self-estemm component of the need for achievement, the need for power, and mental ability. These "characteristics" are strikingly similar to those possessed by the male executives. Moses (1973), Huck (1974), and Moses and Boehm (1975) obtained similar results. That is, the successful female executives possessed the same "characteristics" as successful male executives. And, most of these "characteristics" are those that are generally ascribed to men.

These results suggest that the lyrics from the song in My Fair Lady were based on research conducted by some psychologists. "Why can't a woman be like a man" seems to come through loud and clear.

In an article titled "What Does it Take for a Woman to Make it in Management?", Wood (1975) listed the following traits, among others, that are necessary for a woman if she wants to succeed in management: Competence, Realism, Aggressiveness, Self-Confidence, and Career-Mindedness. Moore (1978) reported that women in non-traditional business roles saw themselves as having characteristics similar to managers and men, and not having characteristics not ascribed to managers and men. This was

also true of the women in the sample at the higher occupational levels, for example, women in business who supervised supervisors.

In comparing traits of male and female managers and non-managers Brenner (1977) reported that the female manager was more like the male manager than were the male and female non-managers. Managers of both sexes were more achievement-oriented and dominant, and less nurturant. The male and female managers' traits were said to support the managerial stereotype, thus indicating that only certain types of males and females become managers. (As you may have noticed, we have quietly slipped into the realm of typology.)

Brenner concluded, however, that individuals with different traits tend to manifest similar behaviors when placed in specific leadership situations. He hypothesized that this might be because traits are influenced by differences in socialization processes the two sexes experience, while behaviors are situationally determined. If this is the case, he says that the need for individuals to possess certain traits in order to become managers can be questioned.

Trait theory is not alone in providing justification for discriminating against women. Attribution theory, not completely unrelated to trait theory, also makes a significant contribution to this end. Deaux and Farris (1974) and Feather (1969) found that men who do well tend to attribute their success to ability, while women are more likely to claim luck as their

cause of success. Moreover, women are more likely to attribute failure to lack of ability, but men rarely do. Thus, we find that according to attribution theory, the women who are successful are lucky, a seemingly unreliable attribute since it is not under the control of the individual woman.

It appears, however, that an appropriate reaction to all of this is "So what?" To state that a woman who is successful attributes her success to luck simply doesn't say anything about variables that affect behavior. What can be done to increase the number of "lucky" women? This kind of explanation is about as useful and helpful as a whip socket on an automobile. It may look attractive, but doesn't contribute to an understanding of what is involved in success. At the same time, it tends to degrade women and make it appear that if they don't have this something called "luck", they are out of luck. It also appears that many women may find themselves in the position of contending that if it weren't for bad luck, they wouldn't have any luck at all.

Even when the attribute of luck is ruled out as a cause of success, Deaux (1974) reported that successful female managers tended to ascribe their success to effort, but successful male managers attributed their success to ability. Deaux contended that effort is a less stable characteristic than ability. It would appear that the woman is placed on the horns of a dilemma. She can't win. If she succeeds, her success is attributed to a less stable characteristic, effort. If she fails, she lacks a-

bility, a more stable characteristic that apparently is not easily changed. But, as in the case of luck, we find that there is no evidence presented to show that the variable in question has an effect on behavior. It seems to us that a most important question that needs answering is whether the attribution of success to ability or luck has any significant effect on performance, i.e., what the individual does. As mentioned above, there is a dearth of data. One indirect measure of the effect of attribution involves determining whether there is a difference between males and females in the selection of activities. If males tend to attribute success to ability and females attribute success to luck, then males should select skill-involved activities and females should select activities that are decided by chance.

Deaux, White and Farris (1975) conducted two investigations of attribution of success. One was a field study and the other was a more controlled laboratory investigation. The field study was conducted at a county fair. There was a variety of games at the fair, some of which were considered games of luck, e.g., bingo, and some were considered games of skill, e.g., tossing rings around bottles. The investigators observed who selected which kind of game to play. The males tended to play games of skill, while the females preferred games of chance.

In the laboratory investigation subjects were presented with a choice between two games, one considered a game of chance and the other a game of skill. The subjects were instructed a-

bout the chance or skill features of the game, and given the opportunity to select the games they wished to play. Nearly 75% of the males selected skill games, while approximately 65% of the females indicated a preference for games of chance.

Though these studies involved one kind of behavior, selecting an activity, they do not involve any behavior that could be used to measure performance. How well the females could do on skill activities is left unanswered. One of the authors (Deaux) reported how she bested a male friend in several dart games in a pub. Some onlookers, including females, attributed her success to luck. We, in our best male chauvinistic garb, will simply state that her male friend was drunk. But it appears as though luck is an important variable even in games of skill, especially if the winner is a woman.

Even if females performed more poorly on skill activities, assuming that we can always obtain agreement about what is a skill activity, we still need to know if they have had the opportunity to acquire the skills. It would be very interesting to conduct an experiment in which female subjects acquired certain skills behaviors and then observe the kinds of activities they select. After all, there is an increased probability that an individual will do that which the individual does well, even if the individual is a woman.

Another area in which female subjects are "inferior" to male subjects involves how well the subject expects to do. Most

of the research in expectancy shows that female subjects tend to expect to do more poorly than male subjects. Crandall (1969) reported several experiments designed to investigate the sex differences in expectancy of intellectual and academic reinforcement. In one experiment she found that 7-12 year old boys had higher overall expectancies and higher individual task expectancies than the girls despite no difference in IQ. In a second experiment she found that 18-26 year old female subjects had lower expectancy of performance than male subjects at the beginning of a task and after 10 trials. Similar differences in expectancies were found in 5 year old children by Williams, Bennett and Best (1975), six and seven year old children by Parsons and Ruble (1969), and Monatanelli and Glass (1969). Stein, Pohly and Mueller (1971) reported that females tended to be optimistic in their expectancies if the tasks were labeled as feminine.

As we have seen with respect to other constructs, there are little or no data reported on the relationship between expectancy and performance. However, Crandall (1969) reported an experiment involving 380 college students. At registration the subjects listed the courses for which they registered and the grades they expected to receive. This procedure was followed at each registration over a five year period. Despite the fact that there was no difference in actual grades received, the males consistently stated higher grade expectancies than the females. The females consistently expected lower grades than they actually

received, and the males consistently expected higher grades than they actually received.

Assuming that course grades are a measure of performance, a tenuous assumption to be sure, we find that the relationship between expectancy and performance is negative for both sexes. This result indicates that treating verbal behavior as epiphenomenal may lead to conclusions that are damaging to individuals or groups of individuals. Most of us have observed in our daily lives that people do not always do what they say they will do. To call what they say they will do an expectancy does not clarify the situation, and if expectancy is accorded explanatory or causal properties, the entire situation is terribly confused. It is conceivable that the introduction of expectancy as a causal variable may create many more problems than it solves. This is because we are confronted with the task of determining the variables that are involved in the development of an expectancy. In addition, we have the very difficult task of determining the variables that are involved in the development of a positive relationship between expectancy and performance when it occurs, and a negative relationship between expectancy and performance when it occurs. That is, what are the variables affecting an expectancy when an expectancy of good performance is related to good performance and what variables are involved when an expectancy of a good performance is related to a poor performance or an expectancy of a poor performance is related to a good perform-

ance?

Is there a viable alternative to what we have thus far outlined? We think so. Since so many of these traits, characteristics, and attributes are inferred from verbal behavior, we propose that a viable alternative involves the treatment of verbal behavior as a legitimate datum in and of itself. It is reasonable to assume that verbal behavior is acquired, and we make that assumption. We also assume that verbal behavior can acquire a number of properties. For example, verbal behavior may acquire the properties of a response. If someone asks us a question, we respond verbally and we can investigate the variables that affect our response just as well as we can investigate any other response. We can design experiments that will enable us to specify the variables that affect the occurrence of various verbal behaviors as the behavior of interest.

Verbal behaviors can acquire the properties of a conditioned stimulus in respondent conditioning or a discriminative stimulus in operant conditioning. It is the discriminative stimulus properties of verbal behavior that may constitute some of the most critical and significant properties of verbal behavior. We are referring to the behavioral control properties that verbal behavior may acquire. Since these control properties are acquired, they will depend on the behavioral histories of the individuals. When we talk about expectancies, we are essentially talking about the control properties that the verbal behavior

emitted by the individual may have over the behaviors in question. If an individual says that she/ he is going to make a 3.5 GPA in a given semester, we are essentially concerned with whether this verbal behavior has acquired control over the behaviors that have to be emitted to attain that GPA. The control of these behaviors is hardly inherent in the verbal behavior. If it were, it would be a relatively simple task to have every college student attain a 3.5 GPA. As a matter of fact, if the control properties of verbal behavior were inherent in the verbal behavior, people's problems in general could be more readily and easily solved.

There are other properties that verbal behavior may acquire, but they are not pertinent to this discussion.

In situations where behavioral measures are made there is little evidence that males and females differ. An example of this lack of difference is provided by Taylor and Epstein (1967). They reported an experiment in which subjects were instructed that they had an opponent whose performance may, at times, be better or worse than their performance. If their performance was not as good as their opponent, they would be shocked. If their opponent's score was poorer than theirs, they could shock their opponent. The subjects were actually shocked, but there was no opponent whom the subject could shock. The performance of the opponent and the shocks administered to the subjects were preprogrammed. Though the male subjects initially administered

greater shocks, the females administered greater and greater shocks in response to the shocks that they received. By the end of the experiment the females were administering shocks of magnitudes comparable to the male subjects. This experiment indicates that when the conditions are appropriate, females don't respond differently from males, even though the behavior involved is considered to be indicative of aggression, a trait or what have you in which women are supposively less well endowed than men.

Women have also had the dubious distinction of suffering from another attribute or characteristic, fear of success. This dubious distinction was accorded women by a woman, Horner (1968). She proposed fear of success as an extension to the need to achieve. In her original research Horner reported that females had a greater fear of success than males.

As has often been the case, fear of success is inferred from verbal behavior. Subjects wrote stories about a woman medical student who had completed one semester of medical school at the top of her class. Women subjects tended to write stories in which the woman medical student failed to complete medical school. The explanation for this kind of story was fear of success. But fear of success is not an independently established variable. It is inferred from the verbal behavior of the subjects. Thus, we find that fear of success is inferred from the stories (verbal behavior) and the failure of the woman medical student in the

stories is ascribed to fear of success. It sounds a bit tautological to us. In addition, Jellison, Jackson-White, Bruder, and Martyna (1978) presented results of a series of experiments which did not support Horner's construct of the "motive to avoid success". Results indicated that both males and females would improve their performance on a measure of intelligence if high performance was approved, and would decrease their performance if high performance was disapproved. As with so many of the studies in this area, there is the question of the generalizability of the results of these experiments to non-laboratory settings and other behaviors. We would agree, however, with Jellison et al when they conclude: "Women may be punished for 'outstanding' achievements in contemporary society and therefore avoid doing well. This does not mean they have a psychological barrier to success. Rather they are behaving in a reasonable manner by avoiding punishment. Consequently, those interested in improving the conditions of women should direct attention to the reward structure of the immediate life situations of women and avoid concerns about supposed personality structures." (p. 383).

Major differences between the sexes develop as a function of labels or tags that are ascribed to people. The same situation develops with respect to ascribing labels and tags to various activities or behaviors. To label a behavior as masculine or feminine is ascribing a qualitative characteristic to the behavior that may be unnecessary, unwarranted, and undesirable. To ascribe masculinity to driving a nail in a board or femininity to picking

up a baby, two behaviors that have been ascribed sexual identities, contributes nothing to a specification of the variables and conditions that may affect emission of the behavior. It is conceivable that such ascriptions maintain the bases for discriminating against women. It is highly probable that many individuals have been provided positive consequences or avoided aversive consequences for engaging in "sex-appropriate" behaviors. Bem and Lenney (1976) reported that they found some subjects did not engage in "cross-sexed" activities while being photographed even if offerred more money to do so.

It is interesting to note the research reported by Peplau (1976) with respect to the ascribing of sexist characteristics to various activities. She investigated fear of success and sex-role attitudes on performance in a competitive and non-competitive situation. Dating couples served as subjects. Female subjects wrote stories about Diane who had just received word that she was one of three students in the state to get a perfect score on the LSAT. Male subjects wrote about Tom. The stories were scored according to Horner's criteria. Female subjects wrote fewer fear of success stories than males. The female subjects were then classified into high and low fear of success and traditional-liberal on their sex-role views. A scrambled word test was used to measure performance in the competitive and non-competitive conditions. Relatively few differences appeared. However, the traditional sex-role females tended to perform

better in the non-competitive condition. Moreover, traditional sex-role females tended to select the more "feminine" careers, such as nursing and education. Liberal sex-role females tended to perform better in the more "masculine" or competitive condition.

Again we find that labeling occupations and conditions as masculine or feminine results in differences. Of course, the 50,000 plus men who are nurses may raise some question about the labeling of nursing as feminine. Aside from that, we still find considerable overlap of distributions which suggests that such labeling does not produce the unanimity of results that should occur if the various traits and characteristics attributed to men, women, and various activities were the critical variables. For example, some traditional sex-role females outperformed liberal sex-role females on a "masculine" or competitive task. How do we account for this result? There isn't a clear specification of the factors responsible for this seeming incongruity. Why is a competitive condition called masculine? There is no information provided about this issue. It is apparent, however, that additional variables are necessary to account for the results. The ascribing of qualitative characteristics to various activities does not clarify the issues, but it may confound them.

If, on the other hand, we assume that a behavior has no qualitative characteristics, we may be in a better position to avoid this rather awkward situation. Moreover, if a behavior is not ascribed qualitative characteristics (that are often unwitt-

ingly given causal status), we may be able to determine the variables that are involved in the emission of behavior. We contend that when masculinity or femininity is ascribed to an activity, we are drifting away from the behaviors that are involved in the activity. When we ascribe masculinity or femininity to an activity, we have directed our attention to a specific set of variables that are assumed to be involved in masculinity or femininity. Thus, we move farther and farther away from variables and conditions that are amenable to direct measurement operations and become more dependent on measurements that are inferred from various conditions that may prevail.

We are not contending that there are no behavioral differences between men and women. We concur with the Frenchman who is reported to have said, "Vive les differences." There are unquestionably differences, just as there are behavioral differences among men. Not only are there differences between men and women, there are differences in the events and conditions that control the emission of the same behaviors in men and women, as well as controlling different behaviors in men and women. But these differences in the events and conditions that control behaviors differentiate one man from another as well as one woman from another. We indicated previously that the control properties of verbal behavior are acquired and, consequently, depend on the individual's behavioral history. At the same time many nonverbal events acquire their control properties. A light switch,

for example, acquires its control over the behaviors that are emitted in its presence. As in the case of verbal behavior, the control that is exercised by a particular event is a function of the individual's behavioral history. One woman may cry in the presence of a reprimand; another woman may fight. The particular behavior that is emitted by the individual will be a function of the history of the individual. If crying in the presence of a reprimand has enabled the individual to avoid additional aversive consequences or obtain some positive consequence, then crying will be the behavior that will probably be emitted in such situations. To call crying an emotional reaction and to contend that women are more emotional than men confound the issue and preclude an examination and analysis of the history and current situation of the individual.

One of our major contentions is that most psychological theories espouse differences that have no behavioral referrents. Moreover, the differences that are "empirically established" tend to support the position that women have inadequacies that may preclude their attaining an equality with men. After all, some research, such as the Broverman et al research, makes it clear that men possess many more socially desirable characteristics than women. Furthermore, men possess many more of the characteristics that are presumed to be essential to being an effective manager according to Schein and others. Given these conditions, it seems reasonable that the population of candidates possessing

the characteristics necessary to be an effective manager would include many more men than women. If managers were randomly selected from the population of candidates possessing these desirable characteristics, more men than women would be selected. Therefore, that there are many more male executives and managers than female is not discrimination. It is what it should be on the basis of psychological research.

One argument that may be raised against this position is that these socially desirable or managerially necessary conditions are acquired. Since they are acquired, it may be possible to create a training program that would enable more women to acquire these characteristics. This sounds like a very cogent argument until we attempt to create a training program designed to enable women to become more independent, more decisive, more logical, more aggressive, and so forth. How would we proceed? What would be the content of such a program? How would we decide that a woman had become more independent, more aggressive, more decisive, more logical, and so forth? What does she have to do? How often does she have to do it? In what conditions does she have to do it? These questions make it clear that the answers have to be in terms of publicly observable behavior. It is very difficult to develop an effective training program that does not specify rather clearly and precisely what is to be learned. To inform someone that becoming more logical is an objective of a training program doesn't convey much information about what

the individual is to acquire. On the other hand, a specification of what is to be learned in behavioral terms coupled with a clear specification of the environmental conditions in which the behavior is to occur would increase considerably the probability that the behavior will be acquired.

If we had the behavioral answers to these questions, we might be able to develop a successful training program. Therefore, we need to know the behaviors emitted by effective managers, executives, truck drivers, and so forth, how often these behaviors are emitted, and the conditions in which they are emitted. To contend that effective managers are decisive, aggressive, logical, and so forth tells us nothing about the manager's behaviors. It is conceivable that what one may call decisive, another may call impulsive. And in the realm of logic, who decides whose logic is to prevail? Again, these difficult questions may be resolved if we concern ourselves with what a person is doing or saying.

A behavioral analysis of men and women in various settings may reveal that the behavioral differences, if any should appear, can be modified by a training program. Fundamental to such a program is the assumption that behavior qua behavior is not sexist. There are few, if any, behaviors that are uniquely or exclusively masculine or feminine. Perhaps the rate of emission of the behaviors or the environments in which the behaviors occur may differentiate men and women. If so, it may be possible

to devise a program that could increase the frequency of the behaviors or have the behaviors occur in different environments. This approach contains some elements that suggest the nature of a training program that would enable women to acquire the behaviors necessary to do the job, whatever the job may be. We have considerable research that specifies some of the variables and conditions that are involved in the acquisition of behavior. We have considerable research that specifies some of the variables and conditions that are involved in discrimination training and generalization. This research can provide a solid basis for the creation of a training program that would enable women to acquire the requisite behaviors or emit the behaviors in the requisite environments.

So long as psychologists continue to crank out research that shows that men and women differ in characteristics or traits that are not related to behavior, it will be possible to justify a wide range of discriminatory practices. Trait-theoretic approaches and constructs make it appear that the practices are not discriminatory, but completely justifiable.

There is another aspect of the trait-theoretic approach that may contribute to this approach's support of what is called discriminatory practices. This aspect is that the research tends to be actuarial in its design. We have previously alluded to this point. If in a study it is found that the proprotion of women who cry in a given situation is significantly greater than

the proportion of men, it is concluded that women are more emotional. This kind of research gives rise to stereotypy in that any woman randomly selected will be considered to be more emotional than any man who may be selected at random. This result leads to considering emotionality as an individual difference, a position that actually obscures individual differences. There are probably as many differences among women as between men and women in their reaction to a particular situation. That is, in a given situation a randomly selected group of women will respond in a wide range of behaviors, a range of behaviors that will probably be equally applicable to men.

We are not criticizing the actuarial approach, but we contend that the limitations of the actuarial approach are ignored in much of this kind of research. The actuarial approach may be valuable in establishing insurance rates, but it is valueless in telling us when a given individual is going to die. An actuarial approach tells us that there is a probability of 1/6 in rolling a seven at the craps table in Las Vegas. It doesn't tell us anything about the number of spots that will appear on the dice on any given roll. An actuarial approach does not tell us if a particular woman will be more or less likely to succeed in a managerial position that a man.

Though much has been written about sex-role stereotypy as well as the stereotypy of men and women, there is a failure to recognize that the kind of research that characterizes this area

has tended to maintain these forms of stereotypy. The mere fact that this kind of research continues to be conducted lends some credence to the maintenance of the stereotypes, especially when the researchers report that a significant portion of the population subscribes to the stereotype.

This kind of research also tends to assume that since there are traits and characteristics of people, the behaviors that are subsumed within the trait must occur in any kind of environmental setting. In other words, there is an implied generalization of behavior that may not be justifiable. For example, a women who cries when reprimanded by a man may not cry when reprimanded by a woman. A woman who cries when criticized by her husband may not cry when criticized by another person. To attentuate this implied behavioral generalization with terms like like propensity, tendency, and so forth does not clarify the issue; it simply obscures it.

We believe that a major error is made by many, if not all, of those who adhere to a trait-theoretic viewpoint. This error consists of converting a dependent variable (a trait measure) into an independent variable. As Tryon (1979) has pointed out, this means that "a measurement is reified into a causal force" (p. 402).

This viewpoint can, as we hope we have demonstrated, have serious and far-reaching consequences. Tryon (1979) also recognized the conclusions to which the trait-theoretic approach leads.

He says: "Since all of these trait differences are "sex differences" and because traits involve basic properties of the person, conclusions about the nature of men and women follow readily. It becomes easy to argue that if women fear success and mathematical calculations, they are in fact unfit for high-prestige positions in the sciences, engineering, and elsewhere; hence social discrimination does not exist-it is just that the sexes are different. A subset of women could conceivably have both the "ability" and "temperament" for success, and thus successful women would exist, but not in proportions to their frequency in the general population" (p. 405).

We are reminded of Caplan and Nelson's (1973) discussion of the "person-blame" causal attribution bias in psychological research on social problems (p. 199). They point out that what is done about a problem depends upon how it is defined. Furthermore, problem definitions are based on assumptions about the causes of the problem and where those causes lie. Thus, if sexism is defined in person-centered terms (i.e., failure of females to possess certain traits or characteristics) then it is logical to initiate person-change procedures. (Unless one also assumes that these traits are innate and immutable. If such a further assumption is made, it seems to us that all one can do is to fold one's tent and steal silently away into the night.) If, on the other hand, the problem of sexism is defined in terms of assumptions about the environmental causes of behavior, then it is logical to initiate environmental-change procedures.

In summary, we believe that the trait-theoretic position contributes to the maintenance of discriminatory practices through its assumptional system, its major constructs, and its major research design. These difficulties could be eliminated by adopting a behavioral approach with its elimination of qualitative constructs, and its emphasis on the clear specification of directly measurable variables and conditions. A behavioral approach could contribute meaningful and objective data that would lead to our keeping our eye on the behavior and its determinants rather than on the behaver. If we can make this discrimination, then we believe that we can eliminate discriminatory practices against women.

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